

**MECHANICAL PROPERTIES OF SOFT CLAY STABILIZED WITH
CEMENT-RICE HUSKS (RH)**

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To my beloved mother and family.....



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ABSTRACT

Chemical stabilization has been extensively used for the improvement of soft clay soils, in enhancing the shear strength and limiting the deformation behaviours. Cement is widely used as a stabilizing material for soils, but the increasing price is causing economic concerns among practitioners and clients alike. The quest for alternative cheaper stabilizing agents is therefore more urgent than before. Rice husk is a major agricultural waste in Malaysia and the common disposal method of open burning has notoriously contributed to environmental pollution. The possibility of admixing rice husks with cement for stabilizing soft soils could be a solution to both problems. This study was aimed at assessing the usefulness of cement-rice husks as an effective soil stabilizer for improving the mechanical properties of clay soils. Laboratory experiments were carried out on a stabilized soft clay to study the inter-relationships between shear wave velocity, one-dimensional compressibility and unconfined compressive strength. Bulk clay samples were collected from the Research Centre for Soft Soils (RECESS) of UTHM. The stabilized specimens were prepared with the clay admixed with 5 % and 10 % cement and various quantities of rice husks, then compacted into cylindrical specimens measuring 38 mm in diameter and 76 mm high. The specimens were then left to cure for different periods up to a month. The stabilized specimens were observed to undergo increase in stiffness and strength, as well as significant reduction in compressibility, highlighting the great potential of cement-rice husk as an alternative soft soil stabilizer.

Keywords: Clay soil stabilization, cement, rice husk, shear wave velocity, one-dimensional compressibility, unconfined compressive strength

ABSTRAK

Penstabilan secara kimia telah digunakan secara meluas dalam penstabilan tanah, untuk menaikkan nilai kekuatan ricih tanah dan menghadkan ciri-ciri pemendapan tanah. Simen telah lama digunakan sebagai bahan penstabil tanah, tetapi kenaikan harganya merisaukan ekonomi pengguna yang terbabit. Oleh itu, permintaan terhadap agen penstabil yang lebih murah sangatlah diutamakan. Sekam padi merupakan antara bahan buangan utama daripada sektor pertanian di Malaysia dan kaedah pelupusannya iaitu secara pembakaran terbuka telah menyumbang kepada berlakunya pencemaran udara. Kecenderungan untuk mencampurkan sekam padi dengan simen dalam penstabilan tanah lembut mungkin merupakan jalan penyelesaian terhadap kedua-dua masalah tersebut. Matlamat kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji kegunaan simen-sekam padi sebagai bahan penstabil tanah yang berkesan dalam memperbaiki ciri-ciri mekanikal tanah liat. Ujikaji-ujikaji makmal dijalankan terhadap tanah liat terstabil untuk mengkaji hubungan antara halaju gelombang ricih, pemampatan satu dimensi dan kekuatan mampatan tak terkurung. Sampel tanah liat diambil dari Pusat Penyelidikan Tanah Lembang (RECESS), UTHM. Spesimen yang terstabil disediakan dengan mencampurkan tanah liat dengan 5 % dan 10 % simen dan pelbagai kuantiti sekam padi. Kemudiannya, dimampatkan menjadi spesimen silinder berukuran 38 mm dan ketinggian 76 mm. Spesimen-spesimen tersebut kemudiannya diawet pada tempoh berlainan sehingga sebulan. Spesimen-spesimen tersebut dipantau bagi memastikan terdapatnya kenaikan nilai-nilai kekukuhan dan kekuatannya, serta penurunan mendapan yang efektif, yang menunjukkan terdapatnya potensi untuk simen-sekam padi sebagai bahan penstabil alternatif untuk tanah liat.

Kata kunci: penstabilan tanah liat, simen, sekam padi, halaju gelombang ricih, pemampatan satu dimensi dan kekuatan mampatan tak terkurung.

CONTENTS

TITLE	i
DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
ABSTRAK	vii
CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF SYMBOLS	xvi
LIST OF APPENDICES	xx
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Research Background	1
1.2 Problem Statement	4
1.3 Research Objectives	5
1.4 Scope of Research	5
1.5 Important of Study	6
1.6 Structure of Thesis	6

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Soft Soil	7
2.2 Soft Soil Stabilization with Deep Mixing	8
2.2.1 The Mixing Process	8
2.3 Stabilizing Agent	10
2.3.1 Ordinary Portland Cement	10
2.3.2 Rice Husk	12
2.3.2.1 Properties and Pozzolanic Effect of Rice Husk	13
2.4 Measurement of Stiffness using Seismic Method	14
2.5 Measurement of v_s for Stabilized Soil	15
2.6 Bender Element (BE) Test	16
2.6.1 BE Test in Geotechnical Testing	17
2.6.2 Determination of Shear Wave Travel Time	18
2.6.3 Methods for Determining Travel Time	20
2.6.4 Near Field Effect	21
2.6.5 Bender Element (BE) Test in Stabilized Soils	21
2.7 Unconfined Compressive Strength (UCS)	22
2.7.1 UCS Test in Stabilized Soil	23
2.8 Correlation between Shear Wave Velocity and UCS Test	24
2.9 Compressibility Studies	25
2.9.1 Compressibility Behaviour on Stabilized Soil	26
 CHAPTER III MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY	 48
3.1 Introduction	48
3.2 Preparation of Raw Materials	49
3.2.1 Clay Soil	49
3.2.2 Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC)	49

3.2.3	Rice Husk (RH)	50
3.2.4	Calculation for the Quantities of Cement and RH	51
3.3	X-ray Fluorescence (XRF) Analysis	52
3.4	Unconfined Tests	53
3.4.1	Specimen Preparation	53
3.4.2	Bender Element (BE) Tests	54
3.4.2.1	Effects of Stacking and Trigger Types on v_s	55
3.4.3	Unconfined Compressive Strength (UCS) Test	55
3.5	One-dimensional Compressibility (Oedometer) Test	56
3.5.1	Preparation of Specimens	56
3.5.2	Oedometer Tests	57

CHAPTER IV RESULTS: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS 73

4.1	Introduction	73
4.2	Physical Properties for Stabilized Specimens	73
4.3	Unconfined Tests	75
4.3.1	Shear Wave Velocity	75
4.3.1.1	Effect of RH Size Fractions on v_s	76
4.3.2	Unconfined Compressive Strength (UCS)	77
4.3.2.1	Stress-strain Behaviour	77
4.3.2.2	Deformation Modulus	78
4.3.2.3	4.3.2.3 Relationship between $E_o - G_o$	79
4.3.3	Factors Governing the Improved Properties	80
4.3.3.1	Cement and RH Content Effect	80
4.3.3.2	Curing Period Effect	81
4.3.4	Correlation between q_u , v_s and G_o	82
4.4	One-dimensional Compressibility Tests	83
4.4.1	Nominal 'zero' of Vertical Stress	83
4.4.2	Effective Yield Stress for Stabilized Specimens	84
4.4.3	Compressibility of the Stabilized Specimens	85

4.4.4	Consolidation Behaviour	85
4.4.4.1	Coefficient of Consolidation (c_v)	86
4.4.4.2	Coefficient of Volume Compressibility (m_v)	87
CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		110
5.1	Introduction	110
5.2	Findings	110
5.3	Recommendations	112
REFERENCES		114
APPENDIX		123



PTTA UTHM
PERPUSTAKAAN TUNKU TUN AMINAH

LIST OF TABLES

2.1	World production rate for rice paddy and rice husk (million metrictons) by Mehta (1992)	27
2.2	Micro analysis of the external surface of the rice husk (Jauberthie, et al., 2000)	27
2.3	Micro analysis of the interior of the rice husk (Jauberthie, et al., 2000)	28
2.4	Micro analysis of the internal surface of the rice husk (Jauberthie, et al., 2000)	28
2.5	The seismic methods employed in determination of stiffness-depth profiles	29
2.6	Shear strength of clays (Head, 1982)	30
2.7	Preconsolidation pressures and curing times of the oedometer specimens (Feng et al., 2001)	31
3.1	Properties of clay soil	57
3.2	Chemical compositions for clay, cement and rice husk	58
3.3	Bender element test specimens	59
3.4	Specimens for unconfined compressive strength and oedometer tests	59
3.5	Sequence of stress application for the oedometer test	60
4.1	The differences of travel time (t) determined by first major	88

peak-to-peak (p-p) and trough-to-trough (t-t)

4.2	The differences shear wave velocities (v_s) between the travel time determined by first major peak-to-peak (p-p) and trough-to-trough (t-t)	89
4.3	The difference of maximum shear modulus (G_o) derived from v_{p-p} and v_{t-t}	90
4.4	The E_o (experimental) and E_o (theoretical) results	91
4.5	The oedometer test results (settlement) for 7-day specimens cured	91
4.6	c_v values for stabilized specimen and unstabilized clay (7 days)	92
4.7	m_v values for stabilized specimen and unstabilized clay (7 days)	92



PTTA UTHM
PERPUSTAKAAN TUNKU TUN AMINAH

LIST OF FIGURES

2.1	Soil map of Batu Pahat, Johor (adapted from the Soil Map of Malaya, 1962)	32
2.2	Stabilized columns mechanically interact with the unstabilized soil	33
2.3	The mixing process in dry deep mixing (Larsson, 2003)	34
2.4	P-wave and S-wave (GDS, 2005)	34
2.5	The influence of compaction moisture content (w) on the dynamic response of stabilized specimens (Hoyos et al., 2004)	35
2.6	The G_0 values evaluated with the bender elements against those from the cyclic triaxial tests (Sahaphol and Miura, 2005).	35
2.7	Variations of shear wave velocity with penetration positions (a) varying the penetration rate, (b) varying the sample size, (c) varying the consolidation pressure (Chan et al., 2010)	36
2.8	An example of the received trace when square wave is used (Jovičić et al., 1996)	37
2.9	The comparison of the travel times from the different methods associated with three different values of effective consolidation pressures (Kumar and Madhusudhan, 2010)	38
2.10	The methods for determining travel time (a) first time of arrival (t_0) and first peak to peak time (t_{pp}), (b) cross-correlation method (Kumar and Madhusudhan, 2010)	39
2.11	An initial downward deflection of a trace, corresponding to low values of R_d , before the actual arrival of the shear wave	40

(Sanches-Salinerio et al., 1986)

2.12	Procedure of bender element test at construction site (Asaka and Abe, 2009)	40
2.13	Principle of unconfined compressive strength test	41
2.14	The relationship between the unconfined compressive strength and fiber content after curing for 28 days (Tang et al., 2006)	41
2.15	The relationship between normalized strength at 28 days with the normalized strengths at other time intervals (Tan et al., 2002)	42
2.16	Influence of curing temperature on q_u (Kitazume and Nishimura, 2009)	42
2.17	Empirical correlations between q_u and v_s for lime-cement stabilized expansive clays (a) Site1 (b) Site 2 (Madhyannapu et al., 2010)	43
2.18	Comparison of predicted and calculated strengths for quality assessment (Madhyannapu et al., 2010)	44
2.19	The variation in shear wave velocity, evaluated from bender element and the resonant column free-free tests (RCff), with the strengths from UCS tests (Åhnberg and Holmén, 2009)	44
2.20	The relationship between q_u and v_s compared to other investigations (Åhnberg and Holmén, 2009)	45
2.21	The time-compression diagram	45
2.22	The compression curves of mud-cement specimens (Feng et al., 2001)	46
2.23	Consolidation curves for unstabilized and 1 % lime stabilized soils (Sakr and Shahin, 2009)	46

2.24	Effect of curing time on preconsolidation pressure or yield stress at 1 % lime (Sakr and Shahin, 2009)	47
3.1(a)	Methodology flow chart (physical tests)	61
3.1(b)	Methodology flow chart (mechanical tests)	62
3.2	Clay soil	63
3.3	Clay samples retrieve at RECESS using motorized auger	63
3.4	Particle size distribution of clay soil	64
3.5	Ordinary portland cement	64
3.6	Rice husk (> 425 μm)	65
3.7	Rice husk (< 425 μm)	65
3.8	Particle size distribution of RH	66
3.9	Physical quantities of various percentages of cement and RH	67
3.10	The compaction mould and tools for the preparation of unconfined specimens	68
3.11	GDS Bender Element Test Systems	69
3.12	The S-wave travel time determined using the first major peak-to-peak (p-p) and trough-to-trough (t-t) methods	69
3.13	The wizard screen of time domain stacking and trigger type	70
3.14	Manual acceptance with manual trigger	70
3.15	Automatic stacking with manual trigger	71
3.16	Automatic stacking with software trigger	71
3.17	Unconfined compression test machine (Geocomp LoadTrac II)	72

4.1	The cement and rice husk content effect on the water content	93
4.2	Bulk density - curing time	93
4.3	Relationship between v_s determined from p-p and t-t	94
4.4	Example of good signal	94
4.5	Example of bad signal	95
4.6	v_s for specimens stabilized with RH only for 3 days	95
4.7	v_s for specimens stabilized with RH only for 7 days	96
4.8	v_s for specimens stabilized with RH only for 14 days	96
4.9	v_s for specimens stabilized with RH only for 28 days	97
4.10	v_s for specimens stabilized with 5 % cement admixed with RH for 3 days	97
4.11	v_s for specimens stabilized with 5 % cement admixed with RH for 7 days	98
4.12	v_s for specimens stabilized with 5 % cement admixed with RH for 14 days	98
4.13	v_s for specimens stabilized with 5 % cement admixed with RH for 28 days	99
4.14	The stress-strain curves obtained from UCS tests for cemented clay after curing for 28 days	99
4.15	The stress-strain curves obtained from UCS tests for for RH admixed with cemented clay after curing for 28 days	100
4.16	The deviation of E_p , E_{50} and E_o from stress-strain curve	100
4.17	Relationship of $E - q_u$	101

4.18	The correlation between $E_{o(\text{theoretical})}$ and $E_{o(\text{experimental})}$	101
4.19	The effect of cement and RH contents on q_u for the stabilized specimens after 28 days of curing period	102
4.20	The effect of cement and RH contents on G_o for the stabilized specimens after 28 days of curing period	102
4.21	The ratio gain in q_u	103
4.22	The ratio gain in G_o	103
4.23	Relationship of q_u - v_s	104
4.24	Relationship of q_u - G_o	104
4.25	Comparison of q_u - v_s between the present study with other researchers	105
4.26	σ_y' obtained using the RL fitting method	105
4.27	σ_y' against curing time	106
4.28	Relationship of $\sigma_y' - q_u$	106
4.29	The compressibility results for the oedometer test (7 days)	107
4.30	The compression curve for 5C2RH at 7 and 28 days	107
4.31	The compression curve for 5C3.5RH at 7 and 28 days	108
4.32	The compression curve for 5C5RH at 7 and 28 days	108
4.33	Determination of pre and post yield region	109

LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

(τ)	- time shift
A	- cross section area
Al_2O_3	- Alumina
BE	- Bender element
C	- cement
C_2S	- Dicalcium silicate
$C_2SH_x, C_3S_2H_x$	- hydrated calcium silicates
C_3A	- Tricalcium aluminate
C_3AH_x, C_4AH_x	- hydrated calcium aluminates
C_3S	- Tricalcium silicate
C_4AF	- Tetracalcium alumino-ferrite
$Ca(OH)_2$	- hydrated lime
Ca^{2+}	- Calcium ion
CaO	- Calcium Oxide
$CC_{xy}(t),$	- cross-correlation function
CO_2	- Carbon dioxide
C-S-H	- calcium silicate hydrate
c_u	- undrained shear strength

c_v	- coefficient of consolidation
DMM	- Deep Mixing Method
DSM	- deep soil mixing
e	- void ratio
e.g.	- for example
E_{50}	- secant modulus at 50 % of peak stress
E_0	- initial tangent modulus
E_p	- peak stress
f	- frequency of the transmitted signal
Fe_2O_3	- Iron Oxide
G_s	- Specific gravity
G_o	- Maximum shear modulus
i.e.	- in other words
K^+	- Potassium ion
K_2O	- Potassium Oxide
kHz	- kilohertz
L	- effective distance traveled by the shear wave through the soil specimen
l	- distance traveled
m	- meter
Mg^{2+}	- Magnesium Oxide

MgO	- Magnesium Oxide
mm	- millimeter
m_v	- coefficient of volume compressibility
Na ₂ O	- Sodium Oxide
NCL	- normal consolidation line
NDT	- Nondestructive test
OPC	- Ordinary Portland cement
P	- compressive force
P_c	- preconsolidation pressure
POC	- palm oil clinker
q_u	- unconfined compressive strength
R^2	- coefficient of correlation
RCff	- column free-free tests
R_d	- near field effect
RECESS	- Research Centre for Soft Soils
RH	- Rice husk
RHA	- rice husk ash
RL	- regression line
SASW	- Spectral analysis surface wave
SiO ₂	- Silica

SO_3	- Sulphur Trioxide
SO_4^{2+}	- Sulfate ion
t	- tonne
t	- travel time
TiO_2	- Titanium Oxide
t_0	- first time of arrival
t_{pp}	- first peak to peak time
UCS	- unconfined compressive strength test
UTHM	- Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia
ν	- Poisson's ratio
v_s	- shear wave velocity
w	- moisture content
W_s	- dry weight
W_w	- wet weight
$X(T)$	- degree of correlation of the received signal
XRF	- X-ray Fluorescence
$Y(T)$	- transmitted signal
μm	- micro meter
ρ	- density
σ_y'	- yield stress

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

At present, for various types of construction on soft soils, engineers are forced to lay foundation over the soft materials to avoid instability and excessive or non-uniform settlement problems. To this end, a variety of ground improvement techniques have been developed and put into practice so far.

The Deep Mixing Method (DMM), a deep in-situ soil stabilization technique using cement and lime as a stabilizing agent, was developed in Japan and the Scandinavian countries independently in 1970s. Numerous research efforts have been carried out in these areas to investigate properties of treated soil, behaviour of DMM improved ground under static and dynamic loading conditions, design methods as well as execution techniques (CDIT, 2002).

The purposes of stabilizing agent addition to soft soils can be stated briefly as follows:

- To increase the strength and stiffness of soft soil.
- To reduce excessive and differential deformations of the soft soil.
- To increase dynamic stiffness of the soft soil.

EuroSoilStab (2002) listed the following advantages of deep stabilization compared to other stabilization methods (i.e. vertical drains and piling):

- Economic in terms of savings of material and energy.
- Flexibility in terms of improving engineering properties.
- It can be flexibly linked with other structures and with the surroundings (no harmful settlement differences).
- It has less impact on the environment with minimal spoil production.

There are many types of stabilizing agents that possess hardening properties and various studies have been published on the stabilization effects of these stabilizing agents. According to Sing et al. (2007), the important criterion in selection of suitable stabilizing agents is their capability of achieving the desirable soil stabilizing function. With appropriate choice of stabilizing agents, soil stabilization by suitable chemical admixture can increase shear strength and bearing capacity, reduce permeability and compressibility and improve swelling characteristics of soft soils.

In most agricultural-based countries, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand, disposal of the abundant agriculture wastes is a pressing issue, especially from the perspective of sustainability and environmental preservation. According to Basha et al. (2005), as a result of the increase in the amount of solid waste all over the globe, engineers and researchers are obliged to carry out

investigations to find useful applications for such wastes. The lower cost makes it an attractive alternative if adequate performance can be obtained.

In Malaysia, for instance, the proper disposal of rice husk (RH) has become a problem, especially when open burning is no longer permitted due to environmental concerns (Sarkawi and Aziz, 2003). The problems caused by irresponsible disposal of this agricultural waste can be significantly reduced by finding suitable engineering applications for its afterlife, such as being used as part of the lightweight backfill material in geotechnical projects.

In an effort to reuse the large quantities of RH, this study was carried out to examine the possibility of utilizing the waste material for soil stabilization. The effectiveness of unburnt RH in soil stabilization was determined by conducting the mechanical tests of stabilized clay with cement and RH.

One of the nondestructive test (NDT) methods is the shear wave velocity measurement with bender element (BE) test. According to Sahaphol and Miura (2004), BE test is a simple technique and is noted as effective tool to determine the maximum shear modulus (G_0) of soil by measuring the velocity of propagation of a shear wave through a soil specimen. This may be due to the simplicity of the test procedure and its non-destructive nature. The obvious advantage of using BE test is that the number of test specimens can be significantly reduced, where the same specimen can be repeatedly tested over a length of time at desired intervals, with minimal disturbance to the specimen itself.

The simultaneous measurement of shear wave velocity provides complementary microlevel information on the fundamental parameters of the physical changes and rigidity in stabilized specimen (Fam and Santamarina, 1996). Besides, the application of the results will assist in field monitoring and assessment of the quality of stabilized soils using seismic methods. Therefore this research focused on shear wave velocity measurements and the correlations of these measurements with other conventional tests for strength and compressibility that can be useful for design works on stabilized soils.

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